

SCRIPT FOR SERVICE

Temple Menorah Friday Night Service

October 19, 2012

Shabbat shalom. Thank you Rabbi Silver and Cantor Hutchings for this beautiful service and for inviting my wife Janet and I to join you for Shabbat.

Temple Menorah is a community that lives up to its name as a light and a beacon for Jewish families in the South Bay. Under Rabbi Silver's leadership over the last 25 years, this synagogue has grown by leaps and bounds. It is known for inclusiveness and spirituality and a commitment to social action, education and civic engagement.

This is also a congregation with a strong connection to Israel. I understand Rabbi Silver is planning to lead a mission to Israel later this year.

I have been proud to have had a role in many of the events that impacted Israel and the Jewish people during my time in Congress. Janet and I were in the Knesset when Sadat came to Jerusalem. We fought for the freedom of Soviet Jews, visited refusniks, pressured Soviet leaders, and saw the doors open to allow them to leave. Janet fought to help Syrian Jews emigrate and we were at Ben Gurion Airport when the airlifts of Ethiopians arrived in Operation Solomon.

Alongside these moment of triumph, there were also challenging times, like attending the funeral of Yitzchak Rabin. We were in Israel during the contentious disengagement from Gaza, the barrages of Hezbollah rockets during the Second Lebanon War and we have seen the scars of Hamas rocketfire in cities like Sderot.

I was asked to speak tonight about the nuclear threat from Iran and the sanctions in place to pressure Iran to change course. Without question this is the greatest existential challenge Israel has ever faced.

The International Atomic Energy Agency continues to deliver alarming news about the Iranian program.

- Over the summer, Iran doubled its enrichment capacity.
- It has moved more centrifuges into the heavily fortified Fordo enrichment site near the heavily populated and holy city of Qom.
- They have doubled their stockpile of 20% medium enriched uranium and there is evidence they may have enriched some to 30%.
- There is also mounting evidence that Iran has begun

testing detonator devices at the Parchin military complex to weaponize the program.

The prospect of a nuclear-armed Iran is not just a threat to Israel. It is a grave threat to the United States, our allies and the stability of the Persian Gulf and greater Middle East. It could spark a devastating arms race. And the threat is only underscored by Iran's role as a state-sponsor of global terror.

By all accounts, the window of opportunity to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon is narrowing. But the intelligence assessments across the board are that there is still time. And that is where sanctions come in.

In the realm of foreign policy, sanctions are a tricky tool. They don't necessarily work quickly and they require immense international coordination that can be hard to sustain. But President Obama, acting on robust

congressional authorization, has been aggressive in ensuring that U.S. sanctions are reinforced by U.S. allies and the U.N. Security Council.

The objective of these sanctions is two-fold:

- First, they aim delay the nuclear program by denying the regime the hard currency it needs to pay for it. This buys time to build an international consensus and pressure for Iran to accept a diplomatic solution.
- Second, they force the mullahs to face a severe political and economic cost for their intransigence.

In the two years since sanctions have begun in earnest, the impact has been swift and stark.

Iran's banking system is isolated. Iran's Central Bank and other banks that try to process Iranian transactions

have been cut off from the international banking system.

Iranian oil production is stagnant and oil exports, which account for 70% of Iran's revenues, have fallen by more than half. Last month, Iran sold only 860,000 barrels per day compared to 2.5 million before the sanctions were in place. Because of sanctions President Obama signed into law last December, Europe, Japan, South Korea, India and others were forced to substantially reduce oil imports from Iran or risk having their financial institutions cut off from U.S. markets.

The little oil Iran is able to sell cannot always be delivered because sanctions prohibit insurers from underwriting the tankers. The Asian markets are now seeing Iranian oil as an unreliable source to meet their growing energy demands.

The Iranian currency – the rial – is on the verge of collapse and the sanctions prevent Iran from even being able to mint new notes to keep up with inflation.

Protests are brewing over the price of basic staples like meat and rice and yogurt and the regime can't sustain price supports.

A more difficult assessment is whether these sanctions have actually slowed Iran's nuclear program. At this point, the clearest evidence of setbacks actually comes from the Stuxnet and Flame computer viruses launched to sabotage Iran's progress by disabling their computer and energy networks – programs suspected to be the result of US-Israeli coordination.

But the sanctions are likely to sting harder as Iran is sapped by its mercenary efforts to prop up the teetering Assad regime.

Having success with sanctions doesn't mean we won't continue intense discussion and planning for a possible military intervention. Preparations for military action are necessary to bring credibility to our pronouncement that all options are on the table.

And it doesn't mean there won't still be heated debates about timelines and redlines, which we can talk more about later this evening. But the sanctions in place today are real and intense and comprehensive and they remain our best chance to force Iran to come back to negotiations in a serious way.

Before I end my remarks, I want to turn for a moment to the Torah portion of the week, which is the story of Noah. There is a lot of discussion about why Noah is chosen to survive the flood and shepherd what was left of God's creations through the storm. The Torah says it was because he was a "tzadik" a man whose righteousness

stood out in a generation filled with violence and corruption.

But there is another answer in his very name. The name Noah is derived from the Hebrew word for rest or comfort. Simply put, he was a humble man.

Noah did not take on his mission with hubris. When the storm ended he did not take personal credit for saving humanity. In fact, the commentaries say he and his family spent every waking moment aboard the ark serving the animals.

Noah is chosen to make sure that civilization is rebuilt with humility, to serve as a check on the baser instincts that led to the destruction in the first place.

It is a message very resonant in our day because humility is an underpinning of ethics in government and business and in the way we treat one another in society.

So I humbly thank you again for this warm invitation and I look forward to meeting all of you and speaking with you more after services.